*173 chief was served special food prepared according to rites known only to him. The basis of this food was goat's head, and the meal had to be eaten in complete darkness. Thus Mamari, admitted to the room by his sister, was able to share his brother-in-law's repast without being found out. It was because of this food that he was later to occupy the highest position in the country.

The fla-n-ton (2) of the People of Ségou and its Development

2. See Chapter 4, p. for the organization of the fla-n-ton'.

When he returned to Ségou-koro, Mamari lived mostly with his mother, whose favorite he was. For her he cultivated [29] on the river bank the n-koyo, a kind of bitter pepper used in native cookery. He worked here virtually every day and, in the course of his labors, made the acquaintance of the water genie who taught him many magic practices which made him superior to other boys of his age. For these reasons, no less than for his unusual strength, they chose him leader of the ton' (ton-tigi).

The ton' members were young men of various races belonging to the villages of Doukounna, Si-do, Bignébougou, Sola, Banan-koroni, Ségou-Sikoro, Doua, etc. Mamari's mother, Sanou Saro, often made dlo (millet beer) or hydromel for her son's friends. In order to repay her kindness, which had gradually come to be habitual, the ton-den' [ton members] decided each to subscribe ten cowries to reimburse the good woman for the expenses incurred by the weekly drinking bout on Thursday. The assessment was known as di-songo, meaning, literally, "price of the honey," because of the purpose for which it was collected.

As time passed, the ton' became tyrannical toward its members. The frequent and large fines could be collected only by force and Mamari went so far as to put the recalcitrants

244 The Bambara groundnut ripens its seed underground. It is cultivated from the southern border of the Sahara to the Cape, but its primary home [31] is in the Sudan where the greatest number of cultivated varieties is found. (1)

1. Jacques Félix, for a study on the Bambara groundnut (Voandzeia subterrena), Agriculture tropicale [Tropical Agriculture], January-February, 1950. [Ed., Revue d'agronomie tropicale.]

Manioc and yams at certain points along the Niger escape the devastations of the Acridiidae insects which can not attack their roots.

Other crops are used to balance the diet: condiments and [263] fleshy plants, such as, pimento, sesame, various labiates, okra, [177] sorrel, squash, peanuts (imported in the sixteenth century from America). Peanuts, to thrive, need loose, light soil. They are sown in June at the beginning of the rainy season and are harvested in [252] November. The natives eat them roasted; they make oil and soap from them and give the stalks to their animals. Cultivation is entirely in the hands of the natives. In Senegal manpower is insufficient; [164] before 1940 thousands of Sudanese workers were called upon each [167] season, particularly Bambara, the "Navétanes," who hired themselves out to the farmers of Senegal in order to acquire the textiles and other products they needed. The peanut is an export product. Also cultivated are nitrogenous vegetables (Bambara groundnuts, black-eyed peas, dolichos, kissis, etc.) and the numerous and varied amaranths, tomatoes, eggplants, gourds, and, since 1940, potatoes which are grown more and more.

222 Finally, we will cite: a) the gathering of wild plants which
263 serve as condiments: the fruits of the baobab (Adansonia digitata), of the corchorus, of the Parkia biglobosa [néré], and of the karite tree (Butyrospermum), formerly called the "butter tree," which is cultivated to some degree -- the fruit is something like that of the palm tree and contains a core whose kernels enclose a fatty matter, shea butter, valued for making soap, as an illuminant, for the toilet;
222 b) the gathering of scarcity foods: baobab, cenchrus, cassia, the kola nut (Sterculia acuminata). Kola nuts are much prized by the natives;